

Winter 2009

Pathos, Winter 2009

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pathos

LITERARY MAGAZINE



Issue 8, Winter 2009

Pathos Literary Magazine is a student publication under the Portland State University Publications Board. All staff members, writers and artists are Portland State students. Content is chosen anonymously by a student review committee. To submit your work for review, email **pathos@pdx.edu**. Our submission guidelines can be found on our website, **pathoslitmag.wordpress.com**. *Pathos* has an open staff policy. We welcome any PSU student who wishes to be involved with the magazine or the events we sponsor.

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Rose City Writers

Joel Eisenhower

Local opportunities for support and collaboration.

IF LITERARY ACTIVITY WAS A COMMODITY, Portland would be sitting on a vast reserve of resources. Not only do we have Powell's, a globally recognized hub of everything book-related, but also have a rich and burgeoning writing scene diverse enough to offer something for anybody. Whether you are just beginning to think about writing or have been at it for decades, there is a group in town to accommodate your interests. From poetry to non-fiction, comic strips to memoirs, these groups will get your creative juices flowing, and help you hone your craft and develop your unique voice.

Write Around Portland

Founded in 1999, this nonprofit has become a model for writing programs in New York, Seattle and various other cities. They offer workshops, host community readings, and publish anthologies to connect their writers with readers around the city. They are hosting Thursday night workshops at HOTLIPS Pizza on SE Hawthorne in the coming months. Each workshop is free, with a suggested donation of \$25 to Write Around Portland.

| | |
|---------|---|
| When | Feb 19th, Mar 19th, Apr 16th, May 21st from 9am-11am |
| Where | HOTLIPS Pizza, 2211 SE Hawthorne |
| Contact | www.writearound.org or email info@writearound.org |

North Portland Poets

This group consists of poets living in the North Portland area, or anyone who is willing to travel to that part of the city to join in a

supportive and safe forum for sharing. The group meets the third Sunday of every month, usually in NoPo, to share food and poetry, get feedback on work, and talk about literary happenings in the city. They extend an invitation to writers of all styles and skill levels, touting themselves as having an easygoing atmosphere that is friendly toward "closet poets."

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| When | third Sunday of every month |
| Where | email for location |
| Contact | NoPoPoets@yahoo.com |

Writer's Group @ CubeSpace

This somewhat informal group gathers weekly at CubeSpace on SE Grand Ave. The format of the meetings is to use a phrase or word as a prompt, then spend 10-20 minutes doing a free write. After the allotted time, everyone reads their work aloud. This is repeated for two hours. No critiquing of work is done, but active listening is always practiced. The group invites anyone who is curious to come by and check it out.

| | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| When | Mondays |
| Where | CubeSpace, 622 SE Grand |
| Contact | show up on Mondays |

The Portland Fiction Project

This group experiments with the idea of writing as both a collaborative and individual effort. Each week, writers from the group are given a single suggestion. Over the course of the week,

the individual writers then create single short stories. The group meets and workshops the stories, which become branches of a larger literary tree.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| When | every week |
| Where | various locations |
| Contact | www.portlandfiction.net |

Portland Women Writers

This group got going in 2003, founded by Emily Trinkaus. She began conducting workshops based on the Amherst Writers and Artists Method. Since then, the group has steadily grown, and now boasts a very diverse crowd of participants, including grandmothers, students, professionals, teachers, and corporate refugees. In addition to workshops, the group partners with several other organizations to offer scholarships to low-income women.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| When | workshop times vary |
| Where | workshop locations vary |
| Contact | www.pdxwomenwriters.com or email events@pdxwomenwriters.com |

Mountain Writers Series

This program began in 1973 at Mt. Hood Community College. Over the years, the popular campus readings evolved as central to a network of literary arts sponsors in the Northwest. MWS, now an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a comprehensive organization that serves as a hub of literary partnerships for a network of over 90 sponsors. MWS features authors of regional, national, and international reputes in a variety of events, including readings, lectures, workshops, and master classes presented in diverse venues and formats throughout the region. Known for the quality and diversity of the writers it features, MWS has featured Nobel Laureates, MacArthur Fellows, U.S. Poet Laureates, Pulitzer Prize recipients, and many other award-winning authors. MWS also introduces writers with emerging reputations and promotes cultural diversity by hosting writers whose work reflects ethnic minority voices and special interests.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| When | various workshops, check website for events |
| Where | usually at area community colleges |
| Contact | http://www.mountainwriters.org or pdxmws@mountainwriters.org |

Oregon Writers Colony

A nonprofit organization formed in the '80s to further the careers of amateur and professional writers, this group offers various workshops and hosts many events around the city. Check their website for a full calendar of readings and gatherings. The group is specifically interested in extending an opportunity for students to have an affiliation with the Oregon writing community that will help to foster ties between the university and local authors.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| When | various workshops |
| Where | various locations |
| Contact | http://www.oregonwriterscolony.org |

Writers' Dojo

A sacred sanctuary for writers, Writers' Dojo was founded by two brothers as a martial arts dojo and writing space—the space continues to operate as a combination of the two. Mixing Eastern spirituality, the body arts, and the craft of writing, Writers' Dojo offers daily and monthly memberships to their North Portland clubhouse. The brothers describe the house as part creative space, part WiFi coffee bar, and part lounge decked out with bamboo flooring, a garden, and showers for bicycling commuters. Be sure to check out their website, which features content from local writers and a soon-to-be-launched literary events calendar.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| When | various workshops |
| Where | 7518 N. Chicago |
| Contact | www.writersdojo.org |

FEATURED PROFESSOR

The Curious Obscurist

Orly Marella

An interview with scavenger, writer and PSU professor Paul Collins.



PAUL COLLINS MAY HAVE ONLY BEGUN teaching at PSU a couple of years ago, but he has already made serious contributions to the literary world. He has written four books, with another out this summer, written for several publications such as *The Believer*, *New Scientist*, and *The New York Times*, and has worked with McSweeney's on the Collins Library, an imprint that re-edits and reprints books that have been

long forgotten. In the classes he teaches at Portland State, such as magazine writing and writing about lives, Professor Collins imparts his knowledge and experience in those fields to eager students hoping to bust into the often discouraging world of writing. He was kind enough to sit down with me and discuss what he loves best—books and writing.

Can you tell me about the Collins Library?

That's something that started 9 years ago. I'd been doing some work with McSweeney's, and as I was putting together the footnotes for my first book, *Banvard's Folly*, one of the books that I covered in there was a memoir by George Psalmanazar. He had this sort of hoax from the early 1700's where he pretended to be from Taiwan.

Did he look Taiwanese?

No, he had blonde hair. And he showed up in London claiming to be from Taiwan. At that point, it was just so exotic that nobody would have known what somebody from Taiwan would look like. So he basically made his living as a local celebrity allegedly from Taiwan and he wrote a memoir many years later about his hoax and it's a fascinating book. I was shocked when I was putting my book together to discover that it hadn't been reprinted since 1765. Not even by a university. So I started kicking around the idea that McSweeney's could reprint it. I had been working with Dave Eggers for a while and I emailed him and said, "Hey what if McSweeney's Books did a series of obscure and forgotten books that have fallen between the cracks?" Months later, I got an email back saying, "Yeah, let's do that." And so basically once a year since then we've been issuing old books that have fallen out of print. The first one we did was called *English as She is Spoke*. Ironically, we never got around to doing Psalmanazar's memoir.

English as She is Spoke was this bilingual guide for Portuguese to learn English. The problem was that it was written by someone who actually didn't know English.

So it's funny.

Yes, it's a classic of unintentional humor. If you heard a noise that was really loud, it would say, "it is a noise which to cleave the head." It was actually really popular in the 1800s. It had been around for a few years before people in the English-speaking world picked it up and started realizing that it was an unintentional classic. It went through a lot of editions. Mark Twain wrote for one edition. And then it went out of print and was out of print for about 40 years before we brought it back. That is a typical sort of find for Collins Library and usually we reissue them as hardback, reprinted, re-edited. It's actually a new edition.

What made you decide to write about forgotten figures in history?

That's something I was always interested in. It's really two things. One was just the way I grew up. My parents liked to go to estate auctions and they would always buy these lots that would include boxes of books and they didn't want the books so they would just give them to me and I would read all of them. That got me interested in old, forgotten literature. The other thing was when I first started grad school, I worked as an assistant for a professor. He

wanted me to go to the library and photocopy the table of contents of every issue in the 1800s of all of these literary magazines for reference. Instead of photocopying, I just started reading the magazines, which blew me away because I had been an English major and I thought I knew 19th century literature—and I did, but only the hits. I didn't know what people back then were actually reading. And I thought, "I need to be reading what they were reading."

Where did you go to school?

I went to UC Davis for undergrad.

Did you have a literary magazine there?

It was the *California Quarterly*. I edited it. I don't know if I published anything of my own in there. I was also focused on newspaper writing. I did music reviews.

How long have you been teaching at PSU?

Two years now.

What's your favorite class to teach?

Probably Magazine Writing, which I'm doing right now. The undergrad version now and the grad version in the spring. And in part I think that's because it's one that draws directly on my own experience. I was freelancing, writing books and also magazines for the better part of a decade before I came here. And so it's fun to use my experience and talk shop with students. It's also really neat to see the stuff that students bring in, 'cause a lot of the class is just dedicated to throwing around story ideas and getting them to develop story ideas. The stuff the students come up with is unexpected, which is really fun. I also appreciate the opportunity to help students who are at least intrigued by writing—and some who are really keen on doing it—to know what to do with it. Like getting into any profession, it's really difficult initially to know where to go and what to do. I went through a real trial-and-error process. It's partly my hope to reduce the ratio of error. Also not to be unnecessarily discouraged, because if you're going about it the wrong way you can actually be very talented and have great story ideas, but if you don't know how to pursue them or pitch them to a magazine, you get unnecessarily discouraged.

As a freelance writer, would you just write an article and pitch it?

When I first started out, yeah. Which is almost the exact wrong way to do it [laughs]. Now I work the pitching process directly into the class as part of conceptualizing the story. You always have an eye on working with the magazine editors, so you develop a story idea and come up with a headline and the deck, or the sub-head and your lead and some sense of whether your story can work and then you pitch it. Then the story evolves, depending on

the needs of the editors and the magazine. The magazine and the pitching process in integral to the evolution of the piece. If you can't summarize it in a sentence, it means you have no focus.

What trends do you see in literature based on what you're reading?

I'm biased; it's just the kind of stuff I like. You know, I read a lot online, which is probably indicative of the state of the industry. It's not that print magazines are dying—some of them are. Daily newspapers are certainly dying and I think that's going to have a real influence on literature in a number of ways. I would say that second-city newspapers are on their way out. *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*; they'll still be around. What form they'll be around in is the question. It's going to be a strange time for literature because of the collapse of daily papers. There's going to be a flood of experienced staff writers from these papers and I don't know what's going to happen.

Stuff moving online is the other big thing. We were just discussing *Wired Magazine* in my magazine writing class today. We were looking at the print version of it—and they will keep it as long as they have advertisers, but they have so many more readers for their online version. It's going to be interesting to see how that affects reporting in magazines. I think to some degree the skimpiness of a lot of online reporting has got to start changing, because a lot of it is a parasitic relationship. Online publications often use the legwork that print publications had done. At some point, they are going to have to start doing the legwork themselves.

Is there anything you think we should keep our eye out for? Authors, books, websites?

This is going to sound counter-intuitive, but something that I've been thinking a lot about lately is book reviewing, because it's getting killed right now. Lots of papers are getting rid of their book section. I think what's happened is that Amazon.com has made it irrelevant. People just read the customer reviews. If you read ten of them, you get some clue. It's made the model of book reviewing and the way books are promoted obsolete. I think some of the most interesting book reviewing is not following the daily newspaper. *The Onion* has one of the most interesting and fun book review and art sections right now. So does *The Stranger* in Seattle. Those are the places that are looking to the future.

I think the whole process of publication is changing and has to change out of necessity. I think the biggest thing that will change in publishing over the next decade is print-on-demand. It will eventually get over the technical shoddiness of its production values and become really important.

What are you currently working on?

I just finished a book. I'm actually in the middle of edits. It's called *The Book of William*. It's coming out in July from Bloomsbury. The subtitle is *How Shakespeare's First Folio Conquered the World*. It's a

travelogue that follows different copies of the first folio around the world as they make their way to Italy and Japan. It's sort of the sideways history of Shakespeare and the folio, but also what happens to any book over the course of 400 years. I'm also doing freelance work.

“When something major is happening in your life, the first thing you should do is take notes, keep a journal. It just allows you to get back into that space of what was happening.”

I read that you wrote about having an autistic child and, if you want to talk about it, how might it have changed the way you write or think about writing?

It's funny; I don't know if it changed the way I write necessarily. My son was diagnosed in late 2001, just before he turned three. It was an experience in which, after the shock of it, I found myself thinking, “What do I do?” But also, “If I'm going to write about this, why should I write about it?” I wound up writing the book *Not Even Wrong*, which combines a memoir of the first year after his diagnosis with the history of autism.

This comes up with me now with students who want to write memoir or personal essays. When something major is happening in your life, the first thing you should do, if you're up for it, is take notes, keep a journal. It just allows you to get back into that space of what was happening. The other thing is that there are many, many reasons to write memoir or personal essays. There are not many reasons to read them. There are good reasons; just not as many. To ask someone to read or publish a personal essay means that it has to be about more than just yourself. It has to tap into something larger and broaden out to some greater need.

I think how that experience has really affected me—in writing about it, I really had to get over myself and think that clearly; this is something important in my life, but why would someone else want to read it?

If you weren't a writer, what would you do?

Well, probably a couple of things. I might be a rare books librarian or bookseller, which I actually did do for a while. Or a musician. I worked in a band for a while. I was the drummer. I really enjoyed that. However, it's not the most sustainable job option, so it's probably just as well that I didn't try to make that my career, but I've always loved music. ♪

Demon in the Blood

Richard Hernandez

Lorca's celebration of the primitive and the unseen.

"You have a voice, you know the styles, but you will never triumph, because you have no *duende*." — Manuel Torre, Andalusian artist to a Spanish singer.

WE LIVE OUR LIVES LESS THAN FULLY aware of the constant presence of vulnerability that surrounds them. In laymen's terms, there are no forcible guarantees about anything that really matters. If we are of the habit of taking existential stock of every change as some harbinger of climatic change, who on earth could emerge from the dizzying abyss of uncertainty which would surely take us under? In part, our psychological mechanisms of self preservation rest upon the predicate of being blindly ignorant of life's radical shifts of direction—or, more explicitly, death's many escorts of time. Our subconscious natures may not have a definite sense or knowledge of the inevitability of change that constantly threatens the stability of our ordinary world of experience, but in the realm of certain arts the grounding of one's own existence vitally depends on establishing a very real and definite connection to those powers which overwhelm the rational intelligence and give way to our more primordial knowingness.

Such knowingness erupts in extravagant abundance in the works of an early 20th century poet by the name of

Federico Garcia Lorca who, born in 1899 in the Spanish vicinity of Granada, eventually became the quintessential folkloric poet of Spain's Andalusian *cante jondo*, or "deep song," before his violent assassination by a fascist firing squad in 1936 at the age of 37. Deep song, the great artistic treasure of the Spanish gypsy tradition, was, according to Lorca, in danger of being lost to the modern cultural

dissemination of languid café society and parlor audiences hungry for less-than-pure forms of expressiveness, such as the now well-known and popular flamenco style of song and dance. Flamenco was a modern twist on an ancient primordial form of expression, which, in Lorca's esteem, may have carried with it regional color, but lacked that deepest quality of importance—spiritual color. This major difference of form and expression, of action and speech, was related to the lacking of an essential and mysterious quality of creative ecstasy defined by Lorca as *duende*.

The lyric poetry, plays and gypsy ballads of Lorca embody an inflamed sense of *duende* in their depiction of love, lust and death. They melt away the artifice of classical European style and invoke a mysterious



Francisco Goya's "Old Man on a Swing"

reevaluation of aesthetic creativity as a transformation of reality itself. The inventive techniques employed by the artist to effect a quality of feeling in an audience depend upon a mastery of the art-form and a poetic sensibility or depth of life on the artist's behalf. If the restlessness of a poet's imagination lacks the faith to break free of fear and struggle, to be lifted up and out of themselves with a spiritual vividness that transforms sorrow into something possibly sublime, then they become susceptible to a slavish dependency on mere formal devices and empty artifice. What informed Lorca's vision of creativity was a curious ineffability he referred to as *duende*.

Unlike the muse, which acts upon the artist as a dictator of inspiration, *duende* is a harbinger of the hidden, and resides in the remote caverns of raw feeling.

and the startling popularity of the bullfight. *Duende* was for Lorca both source and out-flowing, catalyst and quality of a sublime aesthetic creativity which he argued had its joyful expression in the Spanish arts, particularly in the outlying gypsy Andalusian arts. Unlike the muse, which acts upon the artist as a dictator of inspiration, *duende* is a harbinger of the hidden, and resides in the remote caverns of raw feeling. Lorca says it arises from the "mansions of the blood," and has its "roots fastened in mire that we all know and all ignore, the fertile silt that gives us the very substance of art." It flows out of an individual's speech and actions in some sense organically, but this expression is only pure in the degree of its struggle as a tremor from the deep. Lorca takes as a brute fact, and so could one argue of cultures of death in general, that at the bitter root of existence is a primordial sorrow that with authentic release restores the individual and his or her audience with a deep-seated joy, intoxication and spiritual renewal.

The *duende* as a power is invoked by the movement arts, such as song and dance, but isn't confined to them alone. Most important for Lorca's poetry is the bullfight, which he holds as a supreme arena of symbolic embodiment of the *duende* in its performative aspect. The *duende* in this performative reality is essentially a symbolic image that involves a combat with the darker sub-worlds of the self. *Duende*, however, was not achieved easily, hence its elusive nature. This is mainly due to its darker connotations as a swirling up of one's creative energy, a kind of trans-style, or pure expressiveness, as when movement and intention are interchangeable in a creative flash of intensive feeling. This miracle of art requires a shedding of technique and formal abilities as ends in and of themselves. *Duende* strikes at an existential dilemma of how one

In the *duende* is the dark heart of life. Not surprising, as Lorca's own depth of spirit was defined by a "culture of death" in the Spanish traditions of country folklore

is to deal with death in the inescapable instant of time, whether that death is metaphorical, literal or both—as in the bullfight and life. Shaky psyches, revived from the coma induced by denying the risk of the living moment, are awoken from their blind reliance on the metrics of detached knowledge, and are furthermore transformed by the experience of pulling themselves and us, in some sense, out into the naked openness of authentic human expression through their act.

I do believe there are artists and individuals, as Lorca claims, who live outside Spanish culture and whose work and lives are a mad embrace of a restless and impassioned awareness of diabolical spontaneity and eerie sadness. The flux of life rapidly and inconceivably courses through them like blood through the veins. Their lives are in some sense anchored in a sea of feeling and special intuitions. Now that I reflect back, my first experience with *duende* came in the form of a red genius who would play the piano at night with his forehead, read from a burning paper in the morning at his kitchen table and, on occasion, when the weather was abundant with electric moisture, would lay out blue plates on his windowsill and drink the rain from them. His hunger was abated by an unadulterated flow of apples, poetry and booze, almost unfailingly in that precise order. He was allergic to the sun, and therefore spoke little during the brooding daylight hours and was often seen by the locals as a kind of moody misfit. He kept time with a woman who spoke with a voice reminiscent of Betty Boop but possessed a drinking habit like that of Ernest Hemingway, and who, on more than one occasion, had thrown a typewriter at him in a fit of rage or was herself at these dark intervals fended off with a rusty switchblade. He had a voice that could stop time-pieces and a cast of eye that could empty houses and fill graves. He seemed to be able to dwell inside of himself in a manner which befuddled others. He had invisible spaces within himself that he could somehow take refuge in whenever a whirlwind of human stupidity, either in thought or deed, would erupt around his quiet, yet strange equilibrium. In many circumstances, he was a walking disjunction, a man divided against himself. But his relation to a kind of primordial poetics of being was always evident in its mysterious and unique isolation. ♣

Early to Dead, Early to Rise

Tina Christian

Why your mom reads *Twilight*.

SINCE THE RELEASE OF THE TWILIGHT series of books (and now, films), vampires have popped up on the shelves of libraries, stores, and bookstores everywhere. Not since Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire* have women and girls alike been so caught up in the dark world of pale men with troubled pasts. What is it about *Twilight* that inspires the same adoration in grown women as it does in teenage girls?

Modern vampire fiction came to prominence in the 19th century with novels such as John Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *Twilight* is the latest and most popular of a booming genre of fiction aimed primarily at women and girls known as "paranormal romance." Books in this genre are a mix of romance literature and fantasy and include dozens of series, consisting of hundreds of books, in which mostly human heroines fall in love with assorted supernatural beings—usually vampires. According to one bookseller, the draw for women to characters like *Twilight*'s Edward Cullen and *Interview*'s Lestat is that "they represent the vamped-up bad boy." They come with 18th and 19th century chivalric values, great hair, clothes, and oftentimes wealth. "What woman wouldn't want a well-to-do guy fawning over her who has manners? So what if he craves a little blood? We all have our vices," says Katherine, an adult enthusiast of paranormal romance books.

I asked a librarian in Hillsboro what she thought about the interest in the young adult series and she replied, "Teenagers find Bella and Edward's story intoxicating because everything they feel is ten-fold, which they can identify with, while women have said the classic romance of it all is something many books miss today by being too graphic. There isn't any build-up or hunt; it's all there for the taking and the longing is skipped." This echoes many readers' sentiments about fantasy novels in general. Kathie Godfrey, a professor of German at PSU and reader of fantasy, says she finds YA fiction "relaxing. There are so many wonderful, imaginative stories. And when you read adult fantasy, it's just not

as innocent."

That's not to say that sensuality is altogether absent in these novels. The vampires who star in paranormal romance, unlike older representations, are seldom scruffy or strung out. Rather, they often tend to be virile and youthful. The cliché is that vampirism is a metaphor for sex, but the vamps of paranormal romance don't need metaphors for that: they tend to cavort their way through a range of impressively explicit bedroom escapades. What these undead lovers promise is not just eroticism, but a particular variety of eroticism that their female admirers may suspect is archaic, if not flat-out reprehensible, yet certainly has its market appeal: They offer old-fashioned romance in the arms of an alpha male.

In *Twilight*, Edward is reluctant to have sex with Bella because, if he loses control, he might bite and kill her. But it's not the absence of sex that makes the adult readers of Meyer's series sigh and neglect their homework and housework to spend hours posting in online discussion threads with titles like "The intensity ... will it ever go away?" Though technically chaste, the couple engages in marathon sessions of what used to be called "heavy petting," drawing out the erotic tension to just shy of the breaking point. You could call it all a big tease, but as many a woman can testify, sometimes the tease is the best part, and it certainly does add a certain spice to wanting more—books, that is. This sense of erotic anticipation is the cornerstone of Meyer's growing franchise. The answer to the question of why adult women are attracted to the *Twilight* series, according to Traci, an adult reader, boils down to "one word—foreplay." ♡

Experiments in Engagement

Tina Christian

PHAME gives the developmentally disabled a point of entry into the art world.



Actor David Hutzler stars as King Arthur in PHAME's 2006 production of *Camelot*.

PORTLAND IS A CITY WITH AN infamously eclectic variety of artists, theaters and writers. Creative men and women are welcomed in the art sector open-armed and up-and-coming artists are as much a staple of the city as rain and coffee. However, within the local arts community exists a niche most people do not

acknowledge or recognize—the community of disabled artists. PHAME (Pacific Handicapped Artists Musicians and Entertainers) is a non-profit organization, supported through Wells Fargo Bank and various fundraising events throughout the year, that supports developmentally disabled artists in our fair city.

An academy of fine arts that finds talent within high-functioning developmentally disabled adults aged eighteen and over, PHAME was founded in 1984 by Carol Stady, a woman professionally trained in performing arts, when she saw that there were young men and women sitting on the sidelines at the Special Olympics. According to PHAME's Art Director Michael Ashton, "Carol

felt that it was possible for those non-participatory persons with conditions ranging from Down's syndrome to autism to focus their energy through a different outlet like theater." He explained that in the beginning stages of the academy, people were reluctant to jump on board with the idea that developmentally disabled adults could pull off an on-stage performance successfully. Brady proved



The "Be Our Guest" scene from PHAME's production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

the skeptics wrong in the winter of 1984, when a full cast of capable and talented disabled artists performed the Nativity story at the Old Church in downtown Portland.

Now, 25 years later, PHAME has expanded from musical theater shows such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Camelot* to include choir, art, and writing. The academy operates with a truly dedicated staff and generous volunteers that aid in teaching the fundamentals of acting, music, technical theater, art and writing in ten-week courses that run on a quarter system like a typical school year. They hope to add film to the academy's roster of offerings in the near future. The academy offers prep courses that patiently acclimate individuals who may be non-verbal, uncertain, or need a familiar routine to gain the confidence needed to be on stage. The end of each term brings the students closer to their live performance before an audience at the end of the year in June.

Ashton describes one of his favorite success stories, about a woman in her late twenties: "She came in being low verbal, often needing cues, and timid body language. With the preparation she received, by the time she had her audition for that year's play, she was visibly showing more poise and did not need any verbal cues or prompting from anyone during her audition. That was a great moment," he recalls proudly. This year, Ashton was proud to announce that PHAME was able to acquire the Northwest Children's

Theater for this year's musical performance of *The Secret Garden*, running June 21-22.

Along with PHAME's accomplishments in theater, art and music have important roles as well. Two events during the year showcase and sell artists' work. During the holidays, PHAME hosts a gala called the Snow Ball, while spring offers up the Rose Ball. These events are put on for the general public, as well as for the artists themselves. Attendees will see a wide range of media displayed, such as painting, sketches and 3-d art. PHAME's choir has also come into its own, with regular winter performances at the The Oregon Zoo during Zoo Lights and The Grotto during the holiday season. This year, for the first time, the PHAME choir will embark on a tri-state tour, playing in La Grande, OR, Spokane, WA and Coeur d'Alene, ID May 22nd-24th.

There's certainly no shortage of enthusiasm, perseverance, and hard work among the staff and artists of PHAME, who contribute to Portland's artistic community through a variety of avenues. It's always worthwhile to explore one's vision of what art is and can be, and this organization allows for just that. Check out phameacademy.org for ticket information and class schedules. ♡

Serpent Skin

Kori Hill

YOU MET HIM THROUGH A FRIEND of a friend of a friend. You liked how confident he was, how he directed the conversation and asked questions as though he actually cared. And when he asked you out to dinner, you accepted much too quickly and with mortifying enthusiasm. So now you're in your bedroom holding up this outfit, then that outfit, then the outfit you tried on an hour ago. You finally settle on an ensemble you would never wear but for a first date. The dress is short and entirely too low-cut for your comfort. The control-top nylons you're wearing are uncomfortable and keep slipping down. The shoes, my God, the shoes have straps everywhere and at-least- three-inch heels. You'll be lucky to stay upright all the way to the car, but don't men like it when you have to lean on them a little?

He chews too much. He cuts his steak into little tiny cubes and then masticates until he purees them. "Masticate," you think, "is a word that should be used more often," and the fact that you're marveling at the word "masticate" makes you realize that the conversation leaves something to be desired. But you kind of like him. He's well-read, and it's obvious that he's intelligent. He exudes competence and self-assurance, something you lack, so you think, "Maybe he'll complete me," and though the feminist in you is instantly disgusted with yourself, you also somewhat believe it. And that's the other thing. He knows about feminist theory and openly denounces sexism. He tells you that he cried when Beth died at the end of *Little Women*. Who didn't? Still, you think you might be onto something here. Maybe this is the compassionate, wise, secure and, let's be honest, attractive man you've been looking for.



It's been two weeks, and he still hasn't called. You've scrubbed every inch of your apartment, re-alphabetized and faced your books, sorted your CDs by genre and rearranged your closet at

least five times. You even took the initiative to vacuum. You've never been mistaken for the domestic type before but you know that if you stand still for even a moment, the doubts will creep in. Maybe you wore the wrong dress. Did you not laugh at the right moments? It was that stupid thing you said about his favorite author, whoever it was. Some airport novelist, no doubt, but still you should've kept your mouth shut. Or maybe you're just ugly and all your friends are lying to you. It doesn't seem unlikely.

You don't know why it takes two weeks, but you're even more perplexed when he finally does call and you hear yourself say you have plans on the night he wants to take you out. What plans? Is there a Grey's Anatomy marathon that night? Because if it's not a hot date with McDreamy, what the hell are you thinking? You know what you're thinking and you hate it. You can't stand people who play games, act coy, play hard to get. You have no use for any of it, but here you are. You know it will bother him that you said no. You know he's the one doubting now and you try not to take joy in his suffering, continually reminding yourself that you're not that kind of person. You expect to have a voicemail the next day. You have three.



Your next date is a casual affair. You shave your legs and paint your toenails, surefire proof that this is a special occasion. You slip into an airy sundress with spaghetti straps and well-placed ruffles. You pin your hair into a tight French twist, leaving tendrils to frame your face and tickle your neck. Your makeup is simple, a little blush and a dash of lip gloss. The shoes are more user-friendly this time, leather sandals with one-inch heels. You wear your mother's locket. You stand in front of the full-length mirror with something like resignation posing as satisfaction, sighing and smiling at the same time, not sure which involuntary action to commit to.



Wolf at the Door, Natasha Felker

"You look great," he says, with little more than a cursory glance.

"Thanks. It's just something I had lying around." You're remembering your lines perfectly. You feel the urge to improvise on the script a little, but you're afraid the wrong words will come out, and what if you tell him something too real too soon? "Where are we going?" you ask.

He takes you to a small Italian restaurant, the kind of place that at first you're convinced is in violation of several health codes, but then you forget when they serve you the most divine made-from-scratch ravioli of your life. The conversation is pleasant enough.

"So, do you have any siblings?" you ask.

"Two, and I am definitely not the favorite among the three of us." He smiles a little, not sure if he's shared too much.

"I'm right there with you. My brother is definitely the chosen

one between the two of us," you reply, shamelessly grasping for a bonding moment.

"That's hard to believe." It's a line and you know it, but for a moment you catch a

You stand in front of the full-length mirror, sighing and smiling at the same time, not sure which involuntary action to commit to.

glimpse of what might be genuine interest. The moment passes as the exchange of vague intimacies transitions into small talk.

"I'm a huge sports fan. Do you like sports?"

"Oh, definitely," you say, declining to mention that you're afraid of the ball and believe preempting legitimate television for hockey ought to be illegal.

"I have season tickets at the university. We'll have to go sometime." You are thrilled to hear that he envisions a future "sometime."

He drives you home, and you invite him in.

"It's late," he sighs, "I really should be going. I have an early morning tomorrow." You glare at the windshield. It's Friday night; who has an early Saturday morning? You try not to plead.

"Are you sure you don't want to come in? Just one cup of coffee... might help you wake up for the drive home..."

"Thanks, but no," he says, retracting his arm from behind your shoulders. You are suddenly freezing.

You walk alone into your empty apartment building, weary from disappointment. You didn't play your part convincingly enough. He was gone before you even reached the door.

Safe within your bedroom, you strip away the layers of polite conversation and sympathetic laughter. You ache to tell someone about the day your mother gave you her locket, how you came to this place in your life, the way you felt the first time you read *Swann's Way*, how you've always disliked things that fly because they flout their freedom, how you've reread your travel journal

so many times that the soft leather spine has cracked... anything. You ache to tell someone about anything true to you and to know something true to them. Why, for instance, does he hate spring? What is the first thing he prays for every night? How does he justify his inadequacies? He's a novel with a hundred missing pages and it's driving you mad. You're craving a connection and its absence fills your lungs as though having too much room to breathe were constricting your very breath. You slip on a nightgown and fall into a restless sleep.



You dream that you are a serpent. Your skin is every conceivable color and pattern. It changes as you slide from the shade to the sun, to the shadow of an oak. It adjusts as you slip, chameleon-like, past the green of a leaf, the mauve of a flower, the sepia of a branch. The serpent is keen and sly. It knows all the tricks, all the games ever played. The serpent sheds its skin and is found to be nothing underneath.

You wake with an uneasy knot in your lungs. You hate snakes, always have. They come out of nowhere. They drop out of trees and strangle people. Not the garden variety, of course, not the kind you have here, but the one in the dream. It could strangle people. It could strangle you. You change into sweats and a tee and slither back to your subconscious.



He calls you up a couple of days later to invite you to trivia night at a local bar with him and a group of friends. You try not to read too much into the fact that he's introducing you to his friends, but you are certain that *Cosmo* would say it was a good sign and this gives you hope. No matter that you think *Cosmo* and its ilk are among the most obscene wastes of natural resources right next to leaf blowers and plastic tableware; it's suddenly a reliable source.

You pull on a pair of low-rise, boot cut, antique wash, dark rinse jeans with "hidden slenderizing panels," and it occurs to you that you may be expecting denim to solve too many of your problems. After a heated internal debate, you add to the ensemble a wine-colored top and the sterling earrings your great-grandmother passed down to you. Your leather boots add two inches to your height, which makes you feel stronger, more confident.

"Are you ready to go?" he asks, looking you up and down as though inspecting you for the first day of school.

"Ready as I'll ever be."

You get to the bar and he's all charm, introducing you to his friends and getting you a pint. The trivia is a group project, and the questions are exceptionally difficult. What was Punky Brewster's dog's name? How many species of fish are there in the world? Who was the 23rd president? What is the native language in Swaziland? He keeps looking to you for the answers, and you keep having to say you don't know. He looks disappointed in you, as though you'd tricked your way into an invitation by insisting you were an expert in 1980's television programming who got your degree in ichthyology with a double minor in American history and obscure languages and now you're supposed to prove it. You can feel yourself falling in his estimation, and it releases something even more desperate within you.

He drives you home in silence, but he walks you to the door this time, which gives you just a glimmer of hope.

"I had fun," you say weakly, smiling to compensate for your transparent lie. Your cheeks are hot with shame.

"Yeah, we'll have to do it again sometime." He grants you the favor of returning your smile. He's taking pity on you, but you'll take it. It will occur to you later that he answered exactly zero of the questions himself, but right now, in this moment you feel you've failed him miserably in some life-or-death pursuit.

"You should come up and have some coffee, let the buzz wear off the rest of the way. It isn't even late yet."

"I can't tonight, but maybe next time." He kisses you, even lingers a moment and gently tucks some stray hairs behind your ear, and then he is gone.

Gravity has taken a sudden and devastating toll on every aspect of your being. You climb the stairs to your apartment with the unsettling feeling that you are actually descending into a pool of self-doubt and apprehension. You think you might go for a swim.

You're back in your home, your haven, where old, familiar objects have no expectations. You move from item to item, picking them up, turning them over, putting them back in their prescribed positions. It's a ritual that usually brings you comfort, brings you back to the world of the tangible, but tonight it's just a ritual as empty as you are. You put on a pair of sweats and an old tank top and crawl into bed.



The next day he arrives at your building unannounced. You answer the buzzer.

"Hi there, it's me. Can I come up? I thought maybe we'd go get some lunch or something." You panic. Eleven thirty and you're still in your pajamas.

"What a nice surprise. Come on up!" you exclaim, a little too

gaily.

As he makes his way up the five flights of stairs, you sniff at a pair of jeans from your laundry and throw them on, tug at a wrinkled hooded tee, and brush your teeth at lightening speed. You have just pulled your hair into a haphazard bun when he knocks at the door. You try to appear calm as you let him in.

"Caught you napping, did I?" He grins. You look away. Some people are so pompous about getting up early on weekends.

He examines your apartment, measuring its potential. "Potential what?" you wonder. You find yourself feeling more and more suspicious. He turns toward you and smiles. You don't like his smile all that much. It looks too much like he knows something you don't. It makes you feel small and insignificant. You shiver. He smiles more.

"If you want to get changed, we could go and get some lunch. I know a great place just a few blocks from here." He looks away from you then, seeming suddenly fascinated by your dull beige walls.

You catch a glimpse of yourself in the hall mirror. You look like someone from the past you run into at the grocery store, someone whose name you can't quite remember, someone with vaguely familiar features. You search for

clues to how you knew them, when you knew them, if you want to know them now. You look tired. You are tired. You're tired of changing. You're tired of accessorizing your potential relationship. You're just... tired.

"Actually, I think I'll pass." You give no excuse, no explanation, no conciliatory speech to offer closure or protect his ego. You show him out politely.

After locking the door behind him, you slide to the floor with your back against the kitchen counter. You feel heavy at first. Heavy with the burden of carrying yourself alone. "It's just me again," you think. And then you laugh. You laugh until you cry. You cry until you lie still. You lie still for hours, your body pressed against the cool linoleum, and you hope, pray even, that there is something beneath your serpent skin. ♣

You ache to tell someone about the day your mother gave you her locket, how you came to this place in your life, the way you felt the first time you read *Swann's Way*...

Aftermath and Before English

Mark Lysgaard

Aftermath and before English,
we walked past participles,
we swung from dangling modifiers
and clung to grammatical riddles.

We swerved around adjectives and nouns,
adlibbing and advocating.
We admonished ads with ad homonyms;
we weren't adjudicating.

We preferred the prefix prefabricated
and took the suffix for a spin,
and English teachers kept insisting
it's "the" article where we begin.

We conjugated verbs over conjugal visits
and hummed with the homonyms.
We looked into the future tense
and saw a symphony of synonyms.

We saw adverbs aligning with "to be" verbs
and eloquently emphasize their meaning,
while the direct objects stood quite still
unsure which way they were leaning.

We propositioned some prepositions
before they could modify,
but "in," and "on," and "to" were determined
to be sentenced before being tried.

We jogged our memories by a run-on sentence
and neither knew when to stop,

while fragments fell from semi-colons
and conjunctions continued to hop.

We saw Auntie Em' serve antonyms
to all of those who were opposed,
and synonyms tasted like cinnamon
that wore different kinds of cloves.

We sat through state-sponsored elocution
and electrifying orators orate.
We watched thespians masticating in the park,
driving the religious Right irate.

Onomatopoeia landed in town
with a "thud!" and then a "splash!"
Emotional words were overheard,
like "Hogwash!" and "Balderdash!"

Hooligans practiced shenanigans
in colloquial backroom drawls.
And Old English met Ebonics
For a UFC tag-team brawl.

We finally got to grammar's house
where grampar was syntaxfully singing,
"This is where you will be sentenced—
and this is only the beginning."

It was our aftermath before English
and the etymology of words and grammar,
but once the words began to reverb,
we had that poetry slammer.



Best Seat in the State, Amber Smith

Cassius Peterson Says

Mindy Crouchley

BLOOD IS IN MY MOUTH. BLOOD IS ON my hands and in my throat.
 “There’s nothing beneath you but the ground, mother-fucker, and the sooner you learn that, the quicker you become a better person.”

This is Cassius Peterson. He’s not the neighborhood bully.

He leans over me, his hands resting on his knees and his eyes squinting in his tilted head. I look up into his thin face and the desire to sock one of those piercing, intelligent eyes burns in the baser regions of my brain. It just might work if I could move the mangled fingers on my right hand to form a fist. But they are no longer responding to anything except an oddly familiar crunching throbbing pain, oscillating from the wrist to the tips of my fingernails. And anyway, what’s the point?

This is Cassius Peterson. He’s not a thug.

Cassius sighs loudly and straightens his body out. I tense and curl into a defensive position.

“Look, I’m...done. Just think about what I’ve said. Just...think about it.”

He turns his back

and I take the opportunity to lean over and spit blood on the pavement.

“Yeah, I’ll think about it.”

In my head, I sound like Clint Eastwood or Denzel Washington or Clive Owen. I sound like the hero of a thousand video games and action movies. In reality, my voice is thick and wet and utterly dumb. It shakes and cracks and breaks in all the wrong places. Why do I even bother speaking?

This is Cassius Peterson. He’s not a kung fu master.

He only turns his head, swiveling the tiniest of muscles to favor my body with a backward glance.

“What’d you say?”

I clear my throat and feel the sick slip of blood down into my stomach and push myself up on my elbows, which seems to be the best vantage point I’m going to get at the moment.

“I said, I’ll think about it, Cassius.”

I have better control of my voice. It sounds reasonably human and impossibly submissive. I hate the way it sounds.

This is Cassius Peterson. He’s my best friend.

Cassius pivots and stoops again, this time offering his left hand. I reach my own out to him and he helps me up.

We stand in awkward silence for a moment. I lean back down, as far as my bruised ribs will let me bend, and retrieve his glasses from the ground. I present them to him with a shaking hand. He accepts them wordlessly and slides them back over his bleeding nose with a wince of pain stabbing across his face. He spends a full minute staring down at the asphalt below us and I hardly breathe. Mostly because it hurts to breathe.

“I’ll see you around then.”

I don’t nod. I don’t know what to say or do. Fear and humiliation and pity and anger fly to all my limbs at once, paralyzing me. Cassius moves off across the playground pavement.

We’re in sixth grade.

I watch him, and out of the corner of my eye — I see her. Well, not exactly. I see the empty swing where she used to be.

Faggin Cunt-ingham. Phaegan Cunningham.

She’s a breeder. She’s a fucker and a breeder. Her nails are always chipped and her clothes smell like stale cigarette smoke. Her pants are too tight, as if they can barely keep up with her rapidly developing hips. She has breasts which she cannot quite conceal under her clothes. They spill out from the folds of her Hannah Montana t-shirts and catch my eyes in the middle of long division.

I love her.

Phaegan’s empty swing sways in the rain stained March air over an enormous puddle of water.

Through a blur of furious tears I see a red shoe swimming in the murky liquid. It bobs and dips on the surface.

I watch it pop off her foot as I shove her from behind, toppling her off the swing into the dirty wood chips, her legs splashing in the water. She hardly makes a sound—nothing like the angry cry or startled shriek I expect. The lack of response is shocking and a cruel laugh cuts off in my throat.

She doesn’t scramble up and turn around. She doesn’t scream,

I climb gingerly into her empty swing and it’s still warm from the press of her skin. It sings against my limbs.

"You asshole!" She doesn't close her hand around the wood chips and toss them back in my face. She just lays there.

"Hey, come on Faggin—get up."

She stays on the ground and I can see her shoulders heaving. Is she crying?

"It was just a joke. Come on."

I come around the swing and am about to prod her pudgy belly with the toe of my shoe when she pops up from the ground—tears sliding all over her freckled cheeks and dimpled chin. She bunches up her lips and nose and forehead into one huge ugly crinkle and her brown eyes narrow into furious slits.

When she opens her mouth I see the perfect gap between her two front teeth and an unconsciously dopey smile slips across my face.

"My name is Phaegan!"

She's still screaming while she hauls back one of those delicate chubby legs—the one still shoed—and kicks me in the stomach.

I fall to the ground.

She runs off somewhere out my double line of vision, screaming across the playground like a valkyrie out of the sky. I close my eyes.

I climb gingerly into her empty swing and it's still warm from the press of her skin through her tight dark blue jeans. It sings against my limbs.

I wrap my arms around the chains of the swing and the smell of stale cigarette smoke wafts from the metal. I place my hands where I imagine hers were.

I look out over the playground field in front of me — where Phaegan has swooped off into the distance and smile elatedly. I watch a group of ravens—brushed up into the sky with her passing, resettle on the sage colored grass. I see a cloud above burst out from another, like a ship passing through a wave on the sea.

What I don't see is Cassius Peterson step out from the detention room behind me. It's in a portable unit set aside from the main building. One of the two windows faces the playground. I don't watch Cassius walking very carefully along the path, careful not to make too much noise. I don't look behind me as Cassius slips his backpack from his shoulders and swings it down into his two clasped hands. I never see what hits me.

It's his backpack.

He thrusts it like a javelin at the back of my head, knocking me off the swing and down on to my knees. I hit the wood chips with my hands splayed out and roll quickly onto my back, ready to spring up and attack.

I freeze. Cassius has already moved from behind the swing set and is literally on top of me. His eyes are wide behind his glasses and his thick lips are set in a single line of fury. I only have time to shake my head before he kicks my left rib so hard I feel like it might crack. It never does. But it shrieks with pain and so do I.

"What are you doing!?"

My voice is high and nearly lost in a gasp as I struggle to bring air into my lungs. Cassius doesn't answer. A kind of horrible instinct propels me up onto my feet, my hands forming into unwilling fists.

Regina walks by and I nimbly spill her books on the floor. She looks like she might cry and the warm feeling in my stomach burns hotter. I kick one of her books further down the aisle.

"What's your fucking problem!?"

I get the first swipe in, and it lands in the sweet spot between his eyes, making them water and swell and his nose drips red. It's amazing, but I feel a burst of pride. I drop my fists and grin. He uses my pause to slam his own fist into my mouth. I feel teeth give way and my tongue slice in half. Not really...but it does feel that way. I hit the wood chips and scramble backwards — crab style until I hit the pavement. I don't stop until we are halfway to the tetherball court. I don't stop until my stupid bleeding hand gives way in a spasm of pain and drop onto my side, curling into a half-hearted fetal position.

Cassius stands off to the side, surveying. He doesn't look angry anymore. He looks shaken and pale. I uncurl a bit and survey him with righteous fury.

"What's wrong with you?"

Unfortunately, my voice is soft like a whisper. It's confused and indignant and ashamed. Cassius winces and swipes an arm over his face, smearing blood over his cheek and chin.

"I saw what you did."

His voice wavers, though I can't tell whether it's from fear or anger. It's distorted because of the broken nose, and it doesn't hardly sound like Cassius anymore. Or look like him. My disorientation is profound.

"What I did to Faggin?"

He nods once, and I can tell it causes him pain because he swallows hard.

Rage floods through me.

"So, who cares? It's just Fago Cuntingham. You don't even like her."

Cassius swallows again. His glasses slip down his nose, and I can see the moisture in his eyes.

A sudden ringing sucks all the sound out of my ears. Every noise is tinny and muffled. I barely hear myself repeat, "You don't even like her."

Cassius Peterson says in his strange new voice, "I love her."

The sound rushes back in from the empty space where it fled to and I hear myself now. Loud. Too loud.

"Are you fucking retarded?! She's a breeder! She's a breeder and a fucker! She sucked Leo Tooley's dick for a pack of cigarettes. She got her period when she was 10. She's dirty, Cassius. She's..."

I can't think of anything else to say, because my words melt away as my mind calls up an image of the perfect gap between her front teeth. I see her tongue sliding over her two front teeth in the middle of English as she raises her hand to get a bathroom pass.

"She's a slut."

I stare up in defiance at Cassius Peterson and his purple and red face melts away. A different face appears in its place.

Cassius at my house watching cartoons. He's grinning—an impossible-to-ignore grin with his wide lips and wide eyes—everything seeming to stretch to meet his ears. He has huge freaking ears.

Cassius in third grade with his hand pressed in modeling clay. We're making ashtrays for our parents, probably. Cassius holds his hand up—it's filled with grey. We high five and the clay smooshes between our fingers. It drips to the table below us. We giggle hysterically and Mr. Norse calls our names across the room.

Cassius on the bus. We share a seat and I pick the aisle because Regina Flick gets on at the next stop. She wears glasses and paints her fingernails purple. She never uses a backpack, even in the rain. She has tiny hands and I get warm in my stomach when I see them. Regina walks by and I nimbly spill her books on the floor. For a blissful moment our hands touch, and then Regina is scrambling to collect her things while the bus moves forward. She looks like she might cry and the warm feeling in my stomach burns hotter. I kick one of her books further down the aisle.

"Go fetch," I snicker and elbow Cassius.

He shrugs and turns to look out the window at the scenery rolling by, forehead pressed to the glass so I can't see his face. He doesn't say a word until we reach school.

As we're piling out of the bus, Cassius says, "Race you to class."

He shoves me down with a triumphant smile and breaks into a run. I hit the pavement and stare after him, momentarily puzzled. Then I climb to my feet and give chase, hollering curse words at his back. He makes no sound as he runs, but he beats me to class and is seated at his desk by the time I puff up to the door. He stares at me with a look of satisfaction on his face. I don't recognize him.

Until now.

I watch Cassius move off into the distance. And see her. Phaegan Cunningham reappears near the swing set. She has made a complete loop around the school and we are back to square one.

Cassius stops. He turns.

Phaegan is staring down into the water below the swing set—her red shoe spinning wildly on the surface. She glances up, a wisp of her curly reddish orange hair lifting and beckoning me forward

like a finger.

She seems frozen for a moment, as she realizes that we're both watching her. My legs are tensed and I wait for any sign to break into a run. Phaegan opens her mouth, and nervously runs her tongue over her front teeth.

I start to sprint. Never mind my head is swimming. Never mind I'm bloody. Never mind the fire roaring up my side.

I glance frantically off to the left, expecting to see Cassius racing with his long skinny legs—closer. Nearer to her. Better.

He doesn't move. His head is tilted at an angle, surveying.

Cassius in the summer time. I have a stick in my hand, standing at the edge of the pond—prodding a massive and immovable bullfrog. Cassius squats next to me, chewing on a long blade of green grass. Sometimes I think his hand reaches towards the stick, especially when I poke too hard. But mostly he remains silent and observant. Cassius with his head tilted.

Phaegan watches me barreling down on her. She glances down at her shoe. I follow her eyes.

The red shoe spins and spins. Like the bottle in that closet game. Like Seven Minutes in Heaven. But it might never stop. Maybe Phaegan gets to choose.

I look back up.

And she's gone.

Phaegan runs—long curly hair flying out behind her in a maelstrom. Cassius stands in the middle of the field, while all around him ravens peck at vacant worm holes. Phaegan rushes to him like a valkyrie streaming down from the sky to pull him up to Valhalla. Cassius is the hero... her hero.

I scoop the small red shoe from the puddle. It drips dirty brown water into the arm of my jacket. It smells like cigarettes and feet. I turn and toss it after her. The shoe hits the ground and bounces away—lost in the grey grass and the grey day. They're lost as well—two blurry smudges on the horizon.

I walk home alone. ♡

The First Breakup

Charles Bonds

I don't remember the plot of the movie,
because she said she didn't love me.
When I asked her it was desperate,
but she didn't notice that time,
her flatline elegance calling like a television.
I whisper to her now that I hate mystery—
it's the sign of the tragic,
the giving up of this world,
entirely esoteric.
The law is fine; the law will somehow, alone, be it, do.
It's either mystical, and everything can change, or it's the law.
That's why we have sex—we can't agree.

I am wiser, and perhaps smarter.
I am not smarter.
I will cry tonight with my landlord,
will drink tonic as a chaser,
shuffle around in my sleep pants and plan on wedding her.

A mightier expanse opens.
The heart numbs and dines with you.
I fault the breath you calmly blow when I read,
always from your eyebrows.

I am an idiot and there are many things that you say I fail to notice.
but I understand them in the primordial way of an ape.
I am not very cultural.
I went to Russia and hated Russia and bark like a puppy to sublimate rage.
I am yours, though, and I was from the beginning,
relegated, now, to the mattress on your floor—
the play at not wanting love and the long hugs.



Made in Oregon, Michael Sherwood

All Rooster, Baby

Sean Davis

THE WIPERS PUSHED THE WATER OFF the windshield. The rain poured. We were running late for the party. I was a giant chicken. Trish was dressed in a costume of her own design that took more than a month to create. She was a 1950's sci-fi character I think, the Queen of Mars.

"Can you hurry up?" she snapped as if she had been waiting an hour and a half for me to put on green body makeup, an outrageous headdress, mandibles, and a royal robe. She didn't care that we were late. I knew what she was really mad about.

"Listen, I'm sorry this is a store bought costume."

"Pff." She looked deeply into the fogged over passenger window.

"At least it's unique, Trish."

"You're a giant chicken, Dan." She refused to look at me.

"Rooster. And I put on a tie and I have a briefcase... I'm a business rooster."

"That doesn't even make sense."

"That's the point. It's funny."

Her head snapped fiercely and her eyes blazed into mine. "You bought it at Target, Dan! TARGET!"

I sighed and shook my head as I drove.

"We go to Kim's Halloween party every year and I thought last Halloween you would have realized how important this night is to me when we had our 30 minute 'discussion' in her bathroom over your 'costume'."

I laughed despite myself, but quickly turned it into a cough.

She glared.

"You told me to make my costume so I was a black eyed pea."

"You rubbed black paint on your eye and wrote a big P on a T-shirt," she hissed.

"Ted thought it was funny."

"Ted's a knob. Why couldn't you be a space buccaneer like I asked?"

"Come on Trish. Everyone and their brother's gonna be a pirate. People would think I'm Captain Jack Sparrow or something douchie like that."

"Whatever, I had material left over from this gown. You could have been an amazing buccaneer and at least we would have

matched. Now I have to walk in with a chicken."

I stopped at a light and turned my right blinker on. "I'm a rooster baby, all rooster."

I defiantly hit the gas only to hit the brakes for a biker darting in front of us. Suddenly we lurched ahead. There was a smash, then a shatter. We sat looking at each other in disbelief. Then the realization made my cheeks burn and my stomach twist. I looked into the frosted rear window. I could see a dark blur get out of the driver's seat of the car in back of us. Trish saw him too.

"Well," she said, "aren't you going to get his information?"

I motioned with wide eyes. The reason I didn't get out of the car was obvious.

She continued, "I'm not going to do it. My makeup will run. You're driving anyway. Come on Dan, don't be a chick—"

"Don't. Just don't."

"Dan."

"Fine!" I flung the door open and stepped out.

The man that had rear-ended me was either dressed up as Shaft or he was an authentic large, angry black man. He stood up from inspecting his bruised bumper and crushed left headlight with a sour face and balled fists. I jumped because someone honked and laughed as they drove by behind me. I could see a long line of cars waiting for us to resolve this over Shaft's shoulder. Trish's head peaked out, "Just hurry up and get the moron's information. We're late!"

Obviously the royalty of Mars are not known for their great timing.

"Dan, did you hear me?" She popped out of her seat to find that not only did I hear her, so did Shaft. His eyes went from her to me and he bit his bottom lip. There we stood. The Martian Queen was melting as the 1960's Blaxploitation private eye made it very clear he wanted to do me bodily harm. That is when I remembered there was no place to put a wallet in a chicken suit, not to mention a driver's license, or an insurance card. All I could do was watch my feathers being knocked off by the hard rain, float down the gutter and disappear between the bars of the drain grate.

I sighed again, looked up into his eyes and said, "I wish I was a pirate." ♣

Sally

Michael Saul Brannon

LAST YEAR I FELL IN LOVE WITH A GIRL named Sally Crenshaw. She had short black hair and always wore jangly earrings and bracelets, so that when she walked, you could always hear her coming. The way she walked was so impressive; she had this swagger like she knew something really important, but no way in hell was she going to let us in on the big secret. She was always chewing gum too, and blowing big bubbles and popping them all over her face. I swear to god, I never saw something more beautiful than her sitting there licking gum off of her lips.

We were both sophomores, so we had a few classes together, and I always tried to sit by her, although most of the time we had to sit in assigned seats, which put us across the room from each other. The assigned seating always went alphabetically according to last names, and my last name is Ward, which is about as far away from Crenshaw as you can get. I always kind of wished that they would go by first names, because mine is Shane, so we would have been able to sit closer then. It always felt really uncomfortable around roll call because I'd be day-dreaming about Sally or something, and I would never hear the teacher call my name, so they'd have to say it a couple of times.

In class, I always wrote notes to her that said really immature things like "you are cute," or "I like you a lot," and then I'd just crumple them up and throw them in the wastebasket, or leave them under the desk. It was a pretty lame thing to do, I realize now, but when you are just a sophomore you don't really think about things like that.

I really hated school. Everybody seemed so fake. It was like everybody was out to please somebody, but I never really knew who we were supposed to be pleasing. Everybody was always going on about what people were wearing, or who they were hanging out with after school. I wore what I had to because my family was pretty poor and anyway, I didn't give a crap what anybody thought about what I wore. I got a lot of shit for it, too. I guess that's why everyone thought I was weird. My mom always said that I wasn't weird; I just had eccentricities. Funny, because I never looked for them.

Sally was different, though. I mean, she dressed all nice like ev-

eryone else, but she looked different somehow. Like she'd roll up her jeans just a little higher, or she'd wear a bow in her hair when no one else was really wearing bows, and sometimes I felt like everyone else was dressing for her. One time she wore a t-shirt that said "Class of '92" real big on it. A bunch of the sophomores had made up those shirts, but everyone looked ridiculous in them except for her. The shirts were white, and the writing was bright pink and green. But Sally went and tore the arms off of it, and tied it at the bottom so you could almost see her bellybutton, and I almost died when I saw her in it. She used to wear pins, too; all kinds of different pins that she'd collected from somewhere, and they always had little slogans on them, or pictures of animals. One of my favorites simply said "cute and sassy" in this weird font. I honestly have no idea why I liked it, except that to me, it pretty much described her perfectly.

She dressed nice like everyone else, but she looked different somehow. She'd roll up her jeans just a little higher, or she'd wear bows when no one else was really wearing bows.

I didn't really have any friends, partly because I was so scared of everybody, and partly because I felt that for the most part, they were all pretty stupid. I just didn't think anyone got me because of some of the things I did. One thing I did, was I used to sit in gym class, and while everyone else was playing kick ball, I'd write on my arms with a sharpie pen that I hid in my left sock. I carried that pen everywhere, because I figured I would never know when I might get the urge to write something. I'd write about silly things, about how everyone is the same and we all try to be so very different and about how one day I'd get out of this hellhole and make something of myself. I got a lot of crap for that and actually got in a fistfight over it. It was because of this dumb kid Lionel. I don't even remember his last name, but he used to always end up next to me when we were in line doing our exercise routine. Well, one day as we were coming out of gym class, he looked at me all weird and then punched me right in the arm. Then he chuckled and pointed at my arm where I had written some stuff. He just stood there laughing like a big idiot, and I was embarrassed at first

because everyone was looking at us, and then I got really mad. Then I went at him, but I didn't punch him or anything, I just grabbed him by the throat and forced him against the wall, which was pretty amazing seeing as how I was so much smaller than him. I remember the look of terror and surprise in his eyes and I figured that he probably never expected something like that from me. Some of the other kids finally broke it up and he never messed with me after that.

Anyway, it was the little things I did like that, my eccentricities I guess, that made me shy away from other kids and, I think, made them not like me very much. But really I never cared.

One day after school I was walking home and decided to stop at the corner store to get a soda. Sally Crenshaw was outside, smoking cigarettes with Holly Blanchard and Jessica Landrieu. Holly and Jessica were both a year ahead of Sally and me, and they always looked perfect. They wore matching outfits a lot of the time, but not matching exactly alike, just enough so that everybody knew that they had talked about what they were going to wear. Both of them had blonde, shoulder-length hair, and perfectly painted fingernails. They were always hanging out together, smoking cigarettes and looking so damn cool. Sally saw me coming up the lot and I swear, I think that was the first time she had ever noticed me, even though we'd had a few classes together.

"Hey! Why do you write on your arms like that?" Jessica Landrieu was the loudest bitch you ever met. She never could keep her goddamned mouth shut. I ignored her and went inside, and I could hear them giggling and I imagined that they were planning on cutting my arms off and burning them up in a fire. I also cursed myself for wearing short sleeves after school, not because I cared so much, just because I didn't like getting messed with.

I got my soda and went to checkout. The store was run by Ole' Ricky Butter. He was an old war veteran and had bought the store from some Vietnamese people with inheritance money or something. He never hired anybody. It was always just him working at that damn store. I think he probably slept there. He was missing most of his teeth and wore an eyepatch over his left eye. I never understood why the hell he didn't take that inheritance money and fix himself up nice or why he'd want to buy some run-down corner store anyway. He looked pretty harmless to me, but most of the kids in the neighborhood were damn scared of him.

As he was ringing me up, Sally came into the store and walked right up to me. I couldn't gather the nerve to look at her, I just kept digging for change in my pocket, trying to ignore her and Ole' Ricky Butter's right eye, which was focused on my forehead. It was funny the way he looked at you sometimes. He never made eye contact. He just looked at your forehead. Anyway, Sally came

right up to me and stood so close that I could smell her perfume, mixed with a little bit of sweat. I was so nervous I thought I was going to die right there.

"Hey, don't mind Jessica. She's a big goof. Really." She stood there for a second and waited for me to say something. I could feel the sweat building up under my armpits and remembered that I'd forgotten to wear deodorant.

"No biggie." That's all I could think to say. No biggie. I felt like the biggest loser in the whole world.

She stood there for a second and then walked off. I stared at the floor for what seemed like about four hours. Ole' Ricky Butter finally made

a grunting noise at me and I fished out the change and handed it to him. He had this big shit-eating grin on his face and I knew that my face and ears were red as beets and I was sweating through my shirt.

After that, I never spoke to Sally Crenshaw again. I couldn't handle the pressure. It's pretty weird, but after that day I couldn't tell you anything about the pins she wore and I could no longer hear her jangle down the halls. I stopped writing those stupid notes, mostly because I knew I'd never have the guts to actually give them to her anyways. I stopped writing on my arms too, partly because I was so embarrassed, and partly because I just realized it was a damn stupid thing to do. ♡

He was an old war veteran and had bought the store from some Vietnamese people with inheritance money or something. He never hired anybody. It was always just him.

Things That Mattter

Dylan Brown

“JUST WIND THE CAMERA until you don’t feel any resistance,” I’ll say. “Put the film somewhere safe. I know it’s hot and there’s sand in your pockets. Not in the glove compartment. Don’t leave things that matter in your car.” After I say that, you’ll pack up the cooler. I’ll promise I won’t say much on the way home except to ask you to pull over so I can get a Blizzard and a Sprite at Dairy Queen. You won’t get anything.

When we stop at the rest stop because the car overheats, we’ll look at some trees. I’ll think about how they root in the sand. You’ll probably think about something else. I’ll ask you what’s wrong, but you won’t answer. We’ll sit on the curb of the parking lot full of white semis. I’ll want to say something clever. Instead, I’ll say, “That dress looks nice on you.” You won’t be listening. This is probably a good thing.

After the car cools off, the stars will be out. We’ll get some beers on the way home when we stop to get some gas. I’ll drive the rest of the way while you sleep and the radio hums. You’ll wake up like you’ve been dreaming and say, “Don’t develop those pictures.” I’ll nod and roll the windows up so your hair stops flying around like lightning and settles on your shoulders. ♡



Freemont, AZ Trail to the Cemetery, Amber Smith

Scenes From a Childhood: Once Forgotten

Angelina Bressan

Like embers from a burning pile
the autumn leaves
call up a scene.

Clouds of gray threaten to bring down celestial tears.

Standing by the burning pile of dead wood during the cool days of October.

Brisk air fresh and flavorful filled my lungs.

*Chilled, but content, we talked and watched our arduous labor burn up into
flames and smoke.*

Irreverent of the burn ban.

Limbs of fruit trees withered in their skin.

They laid cut off next to the grapevines that were not chosen to ripen the fruit.

He cut them, I piled the unfortunate ones. We burned until smoke hurt our eyes and-

I had to look away.

Multicolored hues incinerated-

Moss hung on as fire slowly stripped it away.

Inside—
the library forms around a tree and spares its limbs.

Now autumn is nostalgia.

In the wind, smells are carried and I cannot differentiate their origin.
(a swirl of fallen leaves rose up in a tornado of fluid moving thoughts)

People underneath walk by and look up—
I sit and look out at the tree
I never had to touch.

White Light, Bleached White Bones

Taylor Tower

He's across from me on the bus.
Beard. Hair the same shade of brown.
Fatter.
He doesn't see me. My heart jumps.
Then another time, outside: so sunny, white light straight through your eyes
and poking your brain like pins.
He has a hat and fiddles with a cigarette.
I can't remember if he smokes.
I think: maybe that hadn't been him floating in the Colorado River,
a little red halo around his soggy head.
Maybe that's not him now
under all that Utah earth, bleached white bones.
My father: a skull with jagged little teeth,
smiling without wanting to.

Endure to the End

Mel Wells

ODDLY, I HAVE ONLY THREE SENSORY memories from the nearly two years I spent in Belgium as a Mormon missionary. Two are of the summer heat. The first involved riding the un-air-conditioned train between Waterloo and Brussels as rivulets of sweat slide down my cleavage, leaving me feeling teased. Asexual as missionaries were supposed to be, I couldn't help but long for fingertips on my skin. The second sensation was of eating watermelons. We bought the heavy, ripened fruits—imported from Kazakhstan—at the market in the Muslim quarter of town. Once home in our apartment, we sliced into the red flesh and split it open, laughing and licking the salty sweetness of the juice dripping down our sun-baked arms.

This we is not the royal we. Except for the bathroom, I was literally never without another female missionary, or “companion,” for the entire 18 months. It was part of the mission rules, all spelled out in a small white booklet, which missionaries referred to as the White Bible. After returning home, I went to the grocery store with my mom and almost had a panic attack when I realized she'd walked out of sight, leaving me alone in the aisle. Missions make you weird for a while afterwards.

The third memory is actually a succession of memories, but they all blend into one long sensation: failure. Missions, to my surprise, were heavily goal-oriented. By goals I mean numbers—number of people “contacted” (talked to about the church), number of lessons taught, number of people asked to be baptized, number of “investigators” (people we were teaching) who came to church, and so on. In our daily planners, we kept track of daily, weekly, and six-week goals. These were heavily influenced by the “ideal” numbers set out by our Mission President (the guy appointed to oversee the geographical area of missionaries). He emphasized that our goals were personal, and not “imposed” on us. In the competitive, perfectionist environment where statistics were everything, this was a semantic distinction only. Not once, during my entire eighteen months, did our weekly numbers match the President's numbers.

I began to dread returning to our apartment each night after a

day of more doors knocked on, opened, and shut; more stunted, awkward conversations with strangers; more teaching rendezvous where people flaked out; more Belgians moving away from us when we sat next to them on the train or bus. Each evening was a guilty session of penciling the day's inadequacy into our planners, making phone calls, and hoping tomorrow would salvage our stats. Thankfully, each morning I woke up forgetful—my crushing worries about insufficient numbers tempered by exhausted, mind-wiping sleep.

But then the alarm would go off.

The White Bible dictated that missionaries must be out of bed at 6:30 sharp every morning and then exercise for 30 minutes. (Apparently missionaries back in the U.S., given cars to use, were getting tubby. The rest of us, scattered throughout the globe, spent most of our day either on bikes or on foot, canvassing cities until 9pm every night, literally walking through the soles of our shoes.)

At 6:30am in Belgium, it is still dark. Summer or winter, it doesn't matter. It's usually raining, too, sometimes for weeks at a time, each day blending into a long, gray haze of hours where the sun never rises or sets but just casts a cement-like hue on everything for a few hours.

I am not a morning person. However, God or the Force or Murphy's Law always paired me with companions who were. (Missionaries are switched around between cities and companions rather frequently. I had only two cities, a rarity, and seven different companions, which is pretty average.) With the exception of a cranky Russian-Congolese companion who ate Nutella in spoonfuls straight from the jar and told stories about her past in the mafia, they were also athletic. So, every morning except Sundays, I would drag my bleary-eyed self out of bed, wiggle my feet into pre-tied sneakers, and force my body into a jog. I quickly learned that one cannot run and sleep at the same time. This is, I think, unfortunate.

In Charleroi, a dirty, industrial city in the south, we circled our urban neighborhood of narrow streets. In Waterloo, a rural, wealthy suburb of Brussels with monuments to Napoleon, we ran on the track at a nearby park. Often, the ground was muddy, or

frozen over, or even frozen and covered with snow, and still we ran. As my mind yawned and stretched and remembered where I was, my sleepy, mild grouchiness was supplanted by the overarching sensation of my entire mission—I was failing.

I almost stumbled whenever it hit me, pummeling into my ego with the deep and thorough knowledge that I was not doing enough.

Mission rules required that, every week, each missionary contact around 200 people, and that each companionship (or set of two missionaries) taught at least 21 lessons and asked two or more people to commit to being baptized. With the reality that some of these potential baptism-ees would back out, a missionary should have been baptizing around two to five people a month. These numbers were all reported by telephone through a hierarchy of elders (male missionaries), who gave them to the Mission President, who then reported to the presidency of the entire LDS church. These numbers were compiled, analyzed, and then

scrutinized in monthly mission-wide meetings. Although individual numbers were supposedly confidential, everyone knew who was doing the best.

Every Sunday evening, you call in your

numbers. Sometimes you give yourself little pep talks before, saying things like, “The numbers don’t really matter; you know how hard you really worked,” or, “It was just a bad week. Things will get better.” But the numbers don’t lie. You’re failing.

Week after week, you sit through church trying to hide your disappointments with smiles. Whenever members come up and ask if any of your “investigators” are coming to church that day, you smile hard enough crush your molars and reply, “They said they would, so we’re still hoping!” This optimism is forced, but you try. God, do you try.

Eventually, the rejections are so overwhelming that you just wish to stop thinking. You daydream about letting your brain nap in the apartment while your body cheerfully bothers strangers and runs to catch the bus. Knocking on strangers’ doors never comes naturally; it’s always an invasion of privacy. You are invasive. If you think too much about it, you become mortified, tongue-tied—you stop sleeping at night. Sometimes you feel greasy, like a used car salesman. This is when the doubts come in.

If Mormonism is the truth, why don’t more people respond? If we are all God’s children, and he wants us to live with Him again after death, and Mormonism is the only way, why doesn’t God do something more? Why doesn’t it feel like He cares?

“Free will,” says the Mission President. “God cannot force

people to choose the right.”

So you try to force yourself. If God is perfect, and people are not responding, then obviously you’re screwing things up somehow. It can’t be God. 98 percent of the people you talk to blow you off. The numbers plod along, continually abysmal.

And every morning, pushing your legs to keep pace, you remember. A day full of rejections stretches before you, and you try to muster up the hope that today, somehow, someone will be receptive. You pray to God that someone will listen. You wonder if God has stopped listening, then glance at your companion jogging beside you, hoping that your lack of faith doesn’t show. It’s obviously this lack of faith causing the failures. You try not to panic. No one intentionally loses faith in God, especially not after spending twenty-odd years constructing it.

And so you continue, round and round that track, running in the dark. ♣

You daydream about letting your brain nap in the apartment while your body cheerfully bothers strangers and runs to catch the bus.

In America, 1971

Theressa Kennedy

When I was a child,
I too knew the tang of potato mould in a pantry.

A diffused hemorrhage of scent,
dust motes glimmering in winged resignation
within paltry shafts of our poor Irish sunlight.

Sitting cross-legged at the bottom of wooden shelving
my father had made by hand, slowly sipping evaporated milk
on the sly, the metal can opener slipping through my five-year-
old fingers, I had brought the potatoes to my nose
and closed my eyes, inhaling the mildewed sweetness.

I was never told,
“This is who we are. It is from here that we hail.”
The words were never given over in language or combed through
a consciousness as blank as mine had been.

In our blood’s vicinity, only the seasons were palpable,
with the joined sacraments of each Holy Day cementing
our straying feet in purgatorial commitment.

The alluring milk-white thorn of our Godhead,
malignant-eyed and tenebrous, as any frame in wormwood,
was as constant as the potatoes we gratefully consumed each day.

I was instructed in customs of instinct and tradition,
whose origins would remain as mysterious and unknowable
to me as the hidden walls of Salamanca.

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Melanie Willis

